

LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1435  
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

# Constipation and Its Correction by Exercise

C. O. Benson

(Instructor of Physical Education,  
Washington University,  
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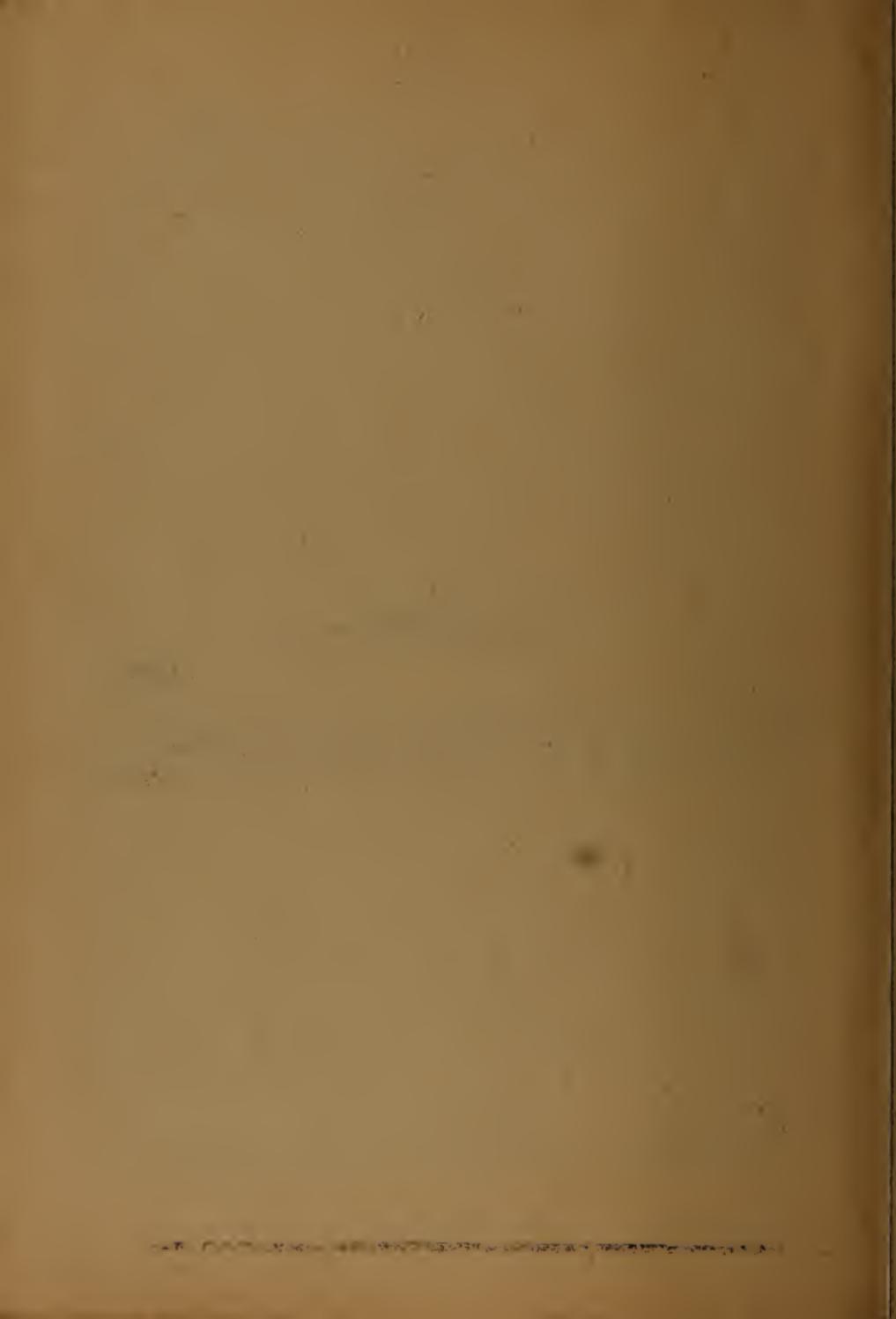
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## CONSTIPATION AND ITS CORRECTION BY EXERCISE

Constipation or dyskinesia is one of the important influences in making people old before their time. The breaking down of the faculties and functions supposed to be due to old age is in reality due to the accumulation of waste and bacteria in the intestines. A habit of life which keeps the bowels clean will set "old age" back to the time when men will enjoy perfect health to the utmost limit of a normal span of years (at the present time the normal span is fifty-eight years).

There are many people who think they are quite normal, though they never had a regular daily movement of the bowels without the aid of laxatives in years. Yet, these same persons will not let the gasoline line on their automobile stay clogged one day.

The body is a very delicate organism and it must be taken care of in a thoughtful fashion. A poisoned night is spent if a day is missed without a bowel movement, for the body cannot carry waste a great length of time without serious injury to it. Under a normal life the

bowels should move at least once a day without artificial aid.

### *Results of Constipation*

When food remains too long in the body it decays, putrefies, and develops into very active poisons. With this decaying comes a depressing feeling caused by these wastes being absorbed into the blood. Then, to make matters worse, this putrefaction retards the bowel action, thus keeping the poisons in the body. Thus, constipation results. Some of these poisons are not so harmful, yet others are very capable of infecting the body, and these enter the blood stream via the intestines and reach other organs where they may cause a chronic disease.

Constipation brings many other ills besides that of poisoning and infecting the body. If this decay occurs too frequently, very serious infections may develop. Frequently diseases associated with old age, such as rheumatism, kidney trouble, and disturbances of the gall bladder are the result of a constipated condition which has run for years. The retained masses of putrefied food in the digestive tract many times displaces and distends the bowels with the ultimate result that it reacts on the nervous system and the circulation of the liver,

and causes much suffering. Appendicitis is often traced to the continuous constipated condition.

Other results of constipation can be dizziness, offensive breath, headache, loss of pep and vitality, bad temper, poor complexion, stomach disorders, skin eruptions, sleepless nights, loss of appetite, stupor, and piles.

### CAUSES OF CONSTIPATION

#### *Lack of Exercise*

One who leads an inactive life must expect to have a flabby body. Lack of exercise lowers the tone of the whole body and especially the abdominal viscera. This is an unhealthy way to live, for it offers no incentive to the stomach and intestines for the vigorous digestion of food. A good workout daily will stimulate and tone the intestines for better functioning.

Unless your work involves a great deal of outdoor walking, a daily walk cannot be overestimated in the treatment of constipation. Learn to stride along with the head and chest up, breathing deeply. Walking in this fashion will do as much good the last ten minutes as the first ten. This exercise will stimulate the appetite and increase the physical and mental

tone of the body. It is a life-enriching as well as life-purifying habit.

Learn to take a few workouts in the gym every week, that is, if you are physically able. However, before you plan your workout have your health doctor plan your program and limitations and what it should include.

In the back of the book will be found exercises that will aid in the correction of constipation. These exercises will be found very beneficial if used daily.

#### *Improper Diet*

One of the chief causes of constipation is improper diet. Correct feeding alone may cure constipation. Even this rule has its exception, for there is a form of constipation associated with proper diet. This brings out the point that it is essential to have a health examination frequently by your family doctor, for he will give you correct knowledge of the condition of your body immediately.

Before taking up the matter of food, it must be remembered that the purpose of this book is to give exercises to cure constipation and not to plan a diet. Your doctor will give you a correct diet. However, it is essential that the food should be chewed until it is almost a pulp before swallowing. This will aid the

stomach and whole digestive tract in assimilating the food.

The spirit of happiness and cheerfulness is important when eating. It cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, laughter during the meal time is very good for the digestive tract in digesting the food. This buoyancy of the mind will aid a great deal in the correction of constipation. It is the only exercise that can be used successfully while eating. Do not be down-cast while eating, as this will prevent normal digestion.

The typical breakfast is usually orange juice, eggs, toast or rolls and coffee. This breakfast will satisfy hunger and supply energy, but it does not meet the demands of health. It is true that this breakfast includes the necessary nutriments, but it does not contain bulk or roughage, which are sometimes desirable in order to give the bowels something to work upon.

In order to give the body foods with roughage bran may be used in moderation. However, bran does not agree with everyone. The indulgence in this food should depend upon the advice of your physician.

Fruit will cure constipation quicker than any constipation remedies ever advertised. Oranges, orange juice, figs, dates, and prunes are very

good for the prevention as well as the correction of constipation. It is a very excellent idea to have some form of fruit for every meal. It cannot be over-emphasized.

Vegetables are an absolute necessity in everyone's diet. Nature gives us food values that cannot be estimated in importance. They clean the interior of the body and act as a broom in the digestive tract, that is, if they are eaten twice a day. They are a mechanical necessity to the intestines. Their bulk is absolutely needed to stimulate the intestines to activity.

Foods which contain no mechanical stimulation such as purées and gruel are open to objection. Pastries are very constipating due to the pasty element, for the secretions of the digestive tract cannot assimilate them. The psychic effect of a monotonous diet may cause poor digestion resulting in constipation. Such foods as eggs, milk, cheese—particularly cottage, pot smearcase and cream, white rice, tea, chocolate are said to be constipating because they seem to slow up the action of the intestinal tract.

On the whole, eat foods that originally gave the human race its vigor, and you will get all the food values, the sunshine, and fresh air,

which that food has absorbed during the days of its growth.

### *Laxatives*

Laxatives do not cure constipation. They may serve to make it chronic. Yet one fourth of the people use them regularly. They only give artificial stimulation to the bowel movements. Every laxative, no matter how innocent in itself, is a habit forming drug for the bowels. They lash the bowel into action once or twice or a few times. After that the bowels will refuse to work without a laxative administered. The dose becomes larger and larger until heroic doses are consumed. NO LAXATIVE OR ANY FORM OF BOWEL WASHING SHOULD BE TAKEN UNLESS ADVISED BY A PHYSICIAN.

### *Posture*

Poor posture ranks on a par with lack of exercise and improper diet in the cause of constipation. Poor posture aids in the slipping of the abdominal organs out of their respective places, resulting in a tangled mass which will act as an interference on the normal bowel action. As a general rule, poor posture hinders deep breathing. Thus, there is no compressing movement upon the organs of the abdominal

regions, such as is found in a normal upright person. Deep, vigorous breathing is an aid to a normal bowel movement. Good posture is an absolute necessity for the freedom of the bowel acting.

#### *During Defecation*

Faulty posture during defecation causes insufficient emptying or difficulty in moving the bowels at all. Many closet seats are too high. The proper altitude is one that brings the knees a little higher than the posterior.

A high closet seat can be remedied by using a footstool to support the feet, thus bringing the body into proper posture.

#### *Hurried Defecation*

A normal defecation ordinarily takes about two to three minutes, but owing to the abuse of resisting the call, ordinary defecation is not always secured in the normal time. Thus residue is left in the large intestine. This offers difficulty when a call comes some later hour, for the residue becomes hard and dry. This residue in the colon results in the condition known as

#### *Irregularity in Answering Call*

Irregularity in answering nature's call causes

irregularity of bowel action. Nature's call means that enough waste is in the colon to cause automatic processes to set in action the bowel movement.

If for any reason the bowels are not permitted to move at once, the call usually disappears in a few minutes and may not reappear for some time. Thus, the wastes lie in the colon with the water in them being absorbed by the intestine, causing the wastes to become dry. Due to these wastes remaining in the intestine distention is produced in the colon and defecation may become difficult or impossible without mechanical aid.

The water of the waste which is absorbed into the blood stream affects the body, causing lower vitality and fatigue affecting the nerves.

### *Treatment*

Hygiene is an important factor in restoring the body to a condition of health. The various abuses of the body that make for constipation should be corrected. General habits, and especially that of neglecting nature's call, should be corrected. Without good hygiene the treatment of constipation cannot be successful.

### *Proper Diet*

See your doctor and have him make out a

proper diet. However, the diet should contain a sufficient amount of roughage, such as vegetables, fruits, and bran. Milk should be used for its vitamin qualities and nourishment.

#### *Rules for Proper Eating*

1. Do not eat too much.
2. Do not study your food while eating.
3. Enjoy what you eat.
4. Chew your food until it swallows itself.
5. Eat regularly.
6. Do not eat when tired.
7. Take a brisk short walk after eating, as this is an aid to the digestive processes.

#### *Laxatives and Enemas*

These should be used only upon the consent of your doctor. They do not cure, and if possible should be avoided.

#### *Mental Attitude*

Patience is necessary, and the feeling "I can't" should be changed to "I will." This feeling can do more than drugs. Do not hurry defecation.

#### *Regularity*

Visit the toilet at least once a day—not to read but to move the bowels. Aim to estab-

lish a habit by visiting the toilet the same time every day.

### *Use of Water*

Most people drink too little water. Six glasses of water a day is the minimum and eight are better. Even more should be taken in hot weather. Avoid ice water, for it chills the stomach. If ice water is the only water available, sip it slowly.

Water should be taken freely between meals. A glass at each meal will help digestion, and there is nothing that so helps the bowels as a glass or two of water before retiring.

### *Bathing*

After taking the exercises described in the back of the book a bath should be taken. Take a shower or tub bath for two minutes with the temperature between 95° and 100° F. for cleansing purposes. This should be followed by a quick cold rub over the entire body. Dry with a rough towel until the skin glows. This should be followed by a cold wet towel rubbed on the abdomen for a few minutes until it attains a reddish glow. Then dry the body thoroughly, dress quickly, and you will have a keen appetite for the morning meal.

The effectiveness of certain exercises in overcoming constipation has been scientifically proved. Diet alone will not cure constipation. Diet and exercise should be used together, and the victim of constipation should not neglect either. Suitable diet and proper exercises can usually be relied upon to cure the most obstinate case of constipation. They will very frequently banish that tired feeling and make one tingle with energy and vitality.

Every one needs exercise other than his work, for work tires the same old muscles and the same old back day after day, while it neglects the vital muscles around the waist. Work wearies, while exercise refreshes. Exercise builds up the muscular system and makes work easier. Exercise may be harmful if too vigorous, and if the patient is not accustomed to it. These exercises as described below should be indulged in mildly at first, and as the body becomes accustomed to exercise increase the dosage.

Monotony in doing the same old exercise cannot be condemned too vigorously. It is better to spread the dosage of work around the different parts of the body rather than to concentrate too vigorously on the muscles of

the waist. The continuous repetition of certain movements results in fatigue, which causes atonic conditions about the parts involved.

Regular exercises in the open air and getting the abdominal muscles and organs in first rate condition is the first step in securing longevity of life and renewed vitality. This will increase the appetite and strengthen the voluntary muscles of defecation. Vigorous exercise diverts the thoughts from business and household cares and relieves an important factor in constipation. Hill climbing, walking, running, horseback riding, and all forms of games are the best forms of exercise for the cure of constipation. It so happens in many cases that the individual is not physically fit for such activities, and then the following exercises cannot be used to advantage until the patient is able to participate in recreative exercises and games.

In the following exercises that of raising both legs to a right angle from the lying position is purposely omitted because of the severe action on the abdomen and the paralyzing effect on the sensitive nervous systems of that region. Often an exaggerated condition of constipation comes from this type of exercise.

In the following exercises it must be remem-

bered that good posture is necessary for the proper effect on the vital organs.

## EXERCISES FOR THE PREVENTION AND CORRECTION OF CONSTIPATION

### EXERCISE 1

*Position:* Lying on back on floor, hands on sides, legs straight.

*Action:* Arch the body upward, forming a bridge with the weight resting on the heels and shoulders.

*Remarks:* This is an excellent exercise before retiring. It can be done ten to twenty times without fatigue.

### EXERCISE 2

*Position:* Feet apart, arms side shoulder level.

*Action:* Twist the body to the right side, bend slightly forward, keeping the knees straight and touch the right foot with the left hand, the right arm being stretched straight up over the body toward the ceiling. Exhale and draw abdomen well in. Repeat exercise twisting the body to the left side and touching left foot with right hand.

### EXERCISE 3

*Position:* Lying on back on floor, hands by

sides, legs straight with the weight of from two to four pounds on the abdomen.

*Action:* Breathe slowly and deeply. The abdomen should rise and fall rhythmically as you breathe.

#### EXERCISE 4

*Position:* Body erect and on toes.

*Action:* Full knee bend, extend arms forward. Exhale and draw abdomen in. Rise to normal position, keeping abdomen in. Raise the chest and then inhale.

#### EXERCISE 5

*Position:* Feet apart, arms side shoulder level. Twist the body to the right side, lean slightly over the right knee; inhale. Return to normal position, then repeat to the left side.

*Remarks:* All twisting is done above the hips.

#### EXERCISE 6

*Position:* Stand erect with chest up, chin in.

*Action:* Bend or sway from side to side, moving from the hips only.

*Remarks:* The arms should wave loosely like the branches of a tree.

#### EXERCISE 7

*Position:* Lying on back on floor, hands by sides, legs straight.

*Action:* Draw the right knee to the chest and exhale. As the right knee is returned to its normal position the left knee is drawn to the chest.

*Remarks:* A variation of this exercise for those whose abdominal muscles are weak, the knee may be lifted to the chest and compressed to it by both arms being wrapped around it.

#### EXERCISE 8

*Position:* Lying on back with the body well relaxed.

*Action:* Expand the chest, pulling it well up and letting the abdomen become hollow. Count six. Then make the chest small, pushing down and making the abdomen large and count two.

*Remarks:* Do this three to five times without breathing; then take several slow, long breaths. Repeat this exercise from fifteen to twenty times. A variation of this exercise may be done by getting down on all fours like a cat, and doing this exercise.

#### EXERCISE 9

*Position:* Stand erect with hands resting on hips.

*Action:* Raise the right knee until it is at right angles with the body, with the toes pointing to-

wards the floor. Extend the foot forward until knee is straight and stretch. Return leg to normal position and repeat with the left leg.

#### EXERCISE 10

*Position:* Stand erect with hands resting on hips.

*Action:* Stationary run, with high knee action, that is, bring your knees up well in front of you and land on the balls of the feet.

#### EXERCISE 11

*Position:* Same as Exercise 10.

*Action:* Draw the right knee to the chest and squeeze with both arms. Raise on toe of the left foot. Replace the right leg and continue exercise by repeating with the left leg.

*Remarks:* An alternate compression and stretching movement is given the abdominal organs.

#### EXERCISE 12

*Position:* Stand erect with fingers interlaced behind the neck.

*Action:* Draw the abdomen in; lift the chest and look straight up towards the ceiling directly above you. Turn your head slowly to the right and then to the left.

*Remarks:* Do this exercise about six times. This is a very good exercise before taking the morning shower or bath.

#### EXERCISE 13

*Position:* Stand erect with the hands above the head.

*Action:* Bend body forward and touch toes with the hands. Exhale and draw in the abdomen. Return to the normal position and inhale.

#### EXERCISE 14

*Position:* Lying on back with the hands tightly closed on the shoulders.

*Action:* Lift the chest and take a deep breath. Put your head back; then bend the body to the right. Stretch the left arm forward and the right sideward. Stretch vigorously. Exhale and return to the normal position. Repeat to the left side.

*Remarks:* This is an excellent first exercise in the morning workout. It can be done while lying in bed. Yawn, stretch, and grunt as much as you wish for the circulation is stimulated.

#### EXERCISE 15

*Position:* Sitting on chair directly below the chandelier or light fixture.

*Action:* Keeping head directly underneath chandelier, make a circle with the abdomen from right to left, or from left to right. Crumple down, then straighten up and you are making your circle.

*Remarks:* Do this ten to twenty times. It is one of the best exercises for the cure and prevention of constipation. It may take some time before one can make the circle in a real circular fashion.

#### EXERCISE 16

*Position:* Feet together, standing with the hands above the head.

*Action:* Twist the body to the left side. Place the left hand on the hip, and with the body in that twisted position, touch the outside of the left heel with the right hand and exhale. Return to normal position and repeat to the right side.

*Remarks:* Knees should be straight during the entire exercise. It may be impossible to touch the heel, but stretch down as far as possible. In returning to the normal erect position, bring the hand out and up.

#### EXERCISE 17

*Position:* Lie on the back in form of a cross with arms extended.

**Action:** Carry right foot up to the left until it touches the left hand. Repeat, using left foot touching right hand.

**Remarks:** A difficult variation of this exercise may be done by doing the exercise in a standing position.

#### EXERCISE 18

**Position:** Lying on back with arms above head on floor keeping knees straight.

**Action:** Assume a sitting position and touch toes with hands; exhale. Return to sitting position, keeping abdomen in; then slowly return to the normal position. Stretch and then inhale deeply.

#### EXERCISE 19

**Position:** Body erect, hands on hips, feet apart with knees straight.

**Action:** Bend to right, then to left.

**Remarks:** Do not bend too far backwards. Repeat this exercise about a dozen times.

#### EXERCISE 20

**Position:** Body erect, chest up, feet apart.

**Action:** Turn head and shoulders to right

as far as possible. Then swing arms, head and shoulders in the opposite direction.

*Remarks:* Waist muscles should be as lax and lifeless as possible. Let them twine around the body as if tied to the body with strings. This should be a daily exercise and can be used by people of all ages. It is very beneficial.

#### EXERCISE 21

*Position:* Stand erect with hands on hips.

*Action:* Bend right and reach towards floor or ground. Reverse movement to left.

*Remarks:* In reaching towards floor bring the hand only to the knee at first and then with each successive stretch bend a little lower until ground is reached. This exercise is very helpful in preventing or curing constipation and torpid liver.

#### EXERCISE 22

*Position:* Stand erect, hands on hips, feet apart.

*Action:* Swing hips as far to right as possible then to left. Keep head as nearly as possible in starting position.

*Remarks:* Hold hips a second or two in each position: *i. e.*, right or left.

*Position:* Body erect, hands on hips.

*Action:* Bend forward very slowly, hinging only at hips, while keeping back straight and face to front. Bend low enough so that back is parallel to floor. Return to normal position slowly.

*Remarks:* You will not like this exercise at first, but it is a very helpful exercise. Repeat exercise three to five times.

**EXERCISE 24**

*Position:* Stand erect with hands high above the head.

*Action:* Bend to right and bring hands to floor near the right foot, going down slowly. Reverse movement and swing hands directly over head and down to floor near left foot.

*Remarks:* Repeat in each direction four or five times. Combine deep breathing with this exercise; exhale as you bend in one direction and inhale as you reverse movement.

**EXERCISE 25**

*Position:* Stand erect with hands on hips, feet together.

*Action:* Bend forward until back and legs are at right angles. Turn right by pivoting at waist and swing head and shoulders around in a large circle until they have been returned to starting position. Reverse movement and swing around in opposite direction.

*Remarks:* Keep knees straight. Do not bend too far backwards. This is a very strenuous but very effective waist strengthener and liver stimulating exercise. (Do not use until you are accustomed to exercising.)

#### EXERCISE 26

*Position:* Stand erect.

*Action:* Take a full breath, hold it, reach out right and left, close fists tightly and tense arms. Repeat two or three times. Now take another deep breath and reach as far as you can with the feet while tensing the muscles of the legs.

*Remarks:* This is an excellent exercise in beginning the morning workout.

#### EXERCISE 27

*Position:* Lying on back very lax and lifeless.

*Action:* Take a full, deep breath very smoothly through the nostrils and at the same time

expand the abdominal muscles as much as possible. Hold breath a few seconds, relax waist and abdominal muscles very slowly and then draw in and upward and exhale. Repeat five to ten times or oftener.

*Remarks:* One of the best exercises a frail, weak person can take and quite as valuable for strong folk.

#### EXERCISE 28

*Position:* Stand erect, arms on level with shoulders.

*Action:* Swing right foot around to a position two feet from left side of left foot thus twisting the legs. At the same time swing head and shoulders as far around to right as possible while keep the arms straight and in line with each other. Reverse and swing as far as possible to the left.

*Remarks:* Repeat exercise eight to sixteen times. This is a good exercise to strengthen and make flexible a good many muscles of the body.

#### EXERCISE 29

*Position:* Stand erect, hands on hips.

*Action:* Right foot raised backward, bend

forward until back and legs are at right angles, exhale. Return to normal position. Repeat exercise four times to both sides.

#### EXERCISE 30

*Position:* Stand erect with chest up, chin in.

*Action:* Expand chest and abdominal muscles suddenly while bringing hands up quickly above head at the same time taking a deep breath just as quickly as possible through the nostrils. Hold breath a few seconds then exhale very slowly as you lower hands to starting points. Repeat three to five times. Now take breath very slowly while bringing arms up laterally till hands meet above head. Bring arms back to sides very quickly and suddenly exhale completely through mouth. Repeat three to five times.

*Remarks:* Another part can be added to the above exercise by taking a deep breath and counting fifty without taking more breath.

The above exercises should be indulged in as you arise in the morning. They will give you pep and vitality that is needed to carry on a successful day. They will give the abdominal organs the workout that will prevent and correct constipation.

These exercises are in reality liver regula-

tors. You will undoubtedly discover after doing these exercises that you feel better in every way.

It is essential to take several deep, long breaths between each exercise. Do not do the same exercises every morning. Pick out five and do them vigorously for fifteen minutes. There are enough exercises for six days of the week; thus you will not become tired of the monotony of exercises.



